



fox snake

Elaphe vulpina

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Reptilia
Order:	Squamata
Family:	Colubridae

Features

The fox snake is about 36 to 54 inches long. Its body is yellowish to light brown and covered on the back with a series of dark brown to black blotches. The head is wider than the neck and is usually brown to reddish with no blotches. The belly is yellow with black checks. Scales with weak keels (ridges) are present along the middle of the back, but other scales are smooth.

Natural History

The fox snake lives in farmlands, prairies, pastures, and woods. It rarely is found far from rivers or streams. It eats small mammals, birds, and bird eggs. It kills its prey by constriction. It is active during the day. It may find shelter under logs, boards, or in other animals' burrows. When disturbed, it may vibrate the tip of its tail and strike. Mating is believed to occur in April. Courting begins when the male chases the female for as much as 40 minutes. The female's eight to 27 eggs are deposited in soil, rotten logs, leaf litter,

or sawdust. Eggs stick together as they are laid. Hatching occurs in August and September.

Habitats

bottomland forests; interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River; Missouri River

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.